

Vast Importance of Post War Readjustment

Senator Weeks Takes Up Problem Already Being Studied Abroad and Tells of Its Need

By RICHARD BARRY.

ALL European countries are building for the after war period. At the drop of the peace hat Germany is ready to start the next race, just as she began the present one—prepared. France is giving serious official thought to this problem. England has what practically amounts to a Reconstruction Ministry, headed by Lord Balfour. The United States alone has ignored it. This nation is as unprepared for peace as it was unprepared for war.

Senator John W. Weeks of Massachusetts has just introduced in Congress a joint resolution calling for the creation of a committee of reconstruction. It provides for a committee of twelve, six from each house of Congress, the appointees to be equally divided among the Republicans and the Democrats. It then apportions the reconstruction problems in twelve departments.

The shortest way to glimpse the magnitude of the problems is to enumerate the Weeks classification of them as follows:

1. Problems affecting labor, including:
 - (a) Unemployment which may follow war.
 - (b) Utilization of discharged soldiers and sailors in civil employments.
 - (c) Conciliation and arbitration of labor disputes.
 - (d) The relation of men and women in similar employments.
 - (e) Substitution of female employees for male, and vice versa.
 - (f) Feasibility of organizing permanent employment agencies.
 - (g) Requirements for labor after the war, both in agricultural and industrial occupations.
 - (h) Distribution of labor.
 - (i) Employment of surplus labor on public works that may be constructed or completed.
2. Problems affecting capital and credit, including:
 - (a) All matters relating to trusts and combinations.
 - (b) Federal loans to private enterprises.
 - (c) Federal supervision of capital issues.
3. Problems affecting public utilities, including:
 - (a) The establishment of a railroad policy after the war, and the relation of the Interstate Commerce Commission to the railroads.
 - (b) All questions relating to communication by wire.
4. Problems resulting from the demobilization of our industrial and military war resources, including:
 - (a) The disposal of surplus Government properties and supplies in this country and abroad.
 - (b) The conversion of munition industries into those of peace.
 - (c) The demobilization of the war strength of the army and navy, and the disposition of the men who have been in the service.
 - (d) The demobilization of war civil workers.
5. Problems affecting our foreign trade, including:
 - (a) The development of new markets.
 - (b) Combinations for the purpose of increasing our selling facilities.
 - (c) Changes in our banking facilities necessary to cooperate with such trade.
6. Problems affecting the continuance of existing industries and the establishment of new industries, including:
 - (a) The supply and control of raw materials.
 - (b) The encouragement of the production in the United States of articles that have not been made in this country heretofore.
 - (c) The encouragement of private enterprise in the development of the resources of the public domain.
 - (d) The utilization of a tariff on imports as a means to protect and encourage home industries.
7. Problems relating to agriculture, including:
 - (a) Price fixing of food products.
 - (b) Federal loans to farmers.
 - (c) Distribution of food products.
 - (d) The allotment of lands to returned soldiers and sailors, and their establishment in new homes on the public domain.
8. Problems affecting the adequate production and effective distribution of coal, gasoline and other fuels.
9. Problems relating to shipping, including shipyards, especially those



Senator John W. Weeks of Massachusetts.

bearing on the sale, continuance of ownership or leasing of both yards and ships.

10. Housing conditions and the disposition of houses constructed by the Government during the war.
11. War legislation now on the statute books, with reference to its repeal, extension or amendment.
12. And in general all matters necessarily arising during the change from the activities of war to the pursuits of peace, including those that may be referred to it by the Senate or House of Representatives.

"The United States can no longer ignore the reconstruction problem," said Senator Weeks, when interviewed on his bill. "Even if the majority of the people do not visualize the important necessity they certainly can have no good reason for opposing the projected forethought of those whose business it is to prepare for the immediate future. When peace comes it will not give us any time for preparation. If history repeats itself, as it doubtless will, peace may be upon us with dramatic suddenness similar to that which forced the war upon us. In one day the whole world scene will change."

Our Nation Only One Inactive.

"The United States is the only nation engaged in war that is not constructively getting ready for peace conditions. Nearly three years ago conferences were held by the Allies at which certain general principles were adopted in regard to trade conditions after the war, the relationship of one Power to another, the relationship of the Allies to friendly countries, neutral nations and the enemy governments. Similar conferences were held by the Central Powers."

"In Great Britain and to some degree in Germany, separate ministries have been established to assume charge of reconstruction. In Germany, if the evidence I have is correct, three such ministries have been organized and in England one has been created."

"My idea is to have the committee employ experts to collect evidence and to assist otherwise in a thorough study of every phase of this vast subject. We must know in detail what all European countries are doing, and we must know what it is possible for us to do."

"Look at the character of the men Great Britain has called to a responsible consideration of reconstruction. There the committee on commercial and industrial policy after the war is headed by Lord Balfour of Burleigh; the committee on agricultural policy by the Earl of Selbourne; the committee on forestry by F. D. Ackland, a Member of Parliament. These committees make their reports to the Prime Minister and in many cases the interim reports have recommended legislation which I understand is under consideration. They have been in operation for more than two years."

"Unless the United States acts promptly we shall lose a great part of the commercial and trade advantages we have obtained during the war, and especially in its early days, and we will have much confusion which will take a long time to overcome."

Senator Weeks was asked to go a little more into detail concerning what he considered the high lights of some of the major problems.

"Take our shipping interests," he continued. "At the end of the war the American merchant fleet is most likely to be larger than that of any other country. It will be largely owned by the Government. Our Government will own some of the greatest shipbuilding plants in the world which we have constructed primarily for war purposes, but it is safe to say that these plants will have a capacity in after the war conditions sufficient to build and repair the merchant fleets of all countries."

"What are we going to do with these ships and shipyards? Are we going to sell the yards, lease them, or is the Government to continue to operate them? Shall we, or shall we not abandon those least advantageously located? What are we going to do with this enormous American tonnage, two millions of which has been made available during the past year?"

"Then there is our foreign trade. This is of vital importance. Are we to allow our trade with the neutral countries, which has been greatly increased during the war period, to lapse, or are we to develop it to a much greater extent?"

"Before the war out of a total production of \$6,000,000,000 we found it necessary to secure foreign markets for something like \$1,000,000,000 of our products. Manufacturing capacity, indeed the entire productive capacity of the country, has been increased enormously since the beginning of the war. If it is to be operated to its full capacity, especially when the demands for munitions of war cease and this army of workers and vast amount of machinery enter the field of industrial production, the United States will quite likely have an additional productive capacity of from 25 to 50 per cent."

Sees Possible Hard Times.

"Markets must be found for this surplus production and they must be foreign markets. If these markets are not found there will necessarily be great slackening in every productive industry in the United States. This will mean a consequent reduction of employees and employment, the closing down of factories, &c. It means hard times."

"Are we not to foresee this possibility, nay, this probability? How are we to avoid it unless we are prepared against it?"

"What shall be done with all the manufacturing plants and other establishments created for war purposes, the machinery of which may or may not be available for after war production?"

"Of profound importance is the problem that will face millions of war workers

Labor, Capital, Trade Domestic and Foreign, Living Costs and Loans Only a Few Angles

now so busily employed. Shall the Government not take some action to protect them at the declaration of peace?"

"High wages have been paid during the war, but the evidence we have does not indicate that the savings of war workers have been materially greater than in normal times. If so a sudden termination of employment would find millions in a serious condition, and it should be the function of the Government to assist them in readjusting themselves in new civil employment."

"Then consider the building trades. Many people believe that they will be especially active as soon as the war is over, but of this there is grave doubt. Ordinarily when times are bad and uncertain financial conditions prevail the building trades are not active. Moreover, the Government is doing a lot of building. What is to be done with these structures? Are we going to continue to own and lease the houses the Government has provided for these war workers, or are we to sell them?"

Lane's Plan Only One So Far.

"What about the demobilization of our army and navy after the war? If there is any plan for this it has not been brought to my attention. What is to be done with these men, and how are we going to aid them to resume their former or other civil employments? With the single exception of a statement recently made by Secretary Lane relative to the occupancy of public lands by soldiers and sailors, I have not heard of any even tentative plan proposed to provide for this exigency. The proposal of Secretary Lane should be given the fullest consideration."

"When peace is declared there will be in process of completion billions of dollars of war orders. Necessarily most of these orders will be cancelled immediately. That will mean that manufacturers throughout the country will have on hand or under contract large quantities of raw material and material in process."

"The prices of such materials will undoubtedly decline at once. Who is going to be responsible for the losses incidental to that situation? Unless the Government saddles itself with these deficiencies there will be an infinite number of claims for amounts aggregating billions of dollars, and as a result of that situation we may have uncertainty for years to come, and probably many failures. The credit facilities of the country must be mobilized and prepared to meet this condition."

"Let us turn to the general labor situation. I am not now referring to the labor situation as it affects war workers or returned soldiers and sailors. Many new situations have developed since the beginning of the war."

Millions of Women at Work.

"Millions of women are now doing work heretofore performed by men and with which they were not connected until the war required it. Are they to return to their former employments or unemployment, or are they to continue their present pursuits in competition with the millions returning from military service? Would it not be well for us to provide for permanent employment agencies throughout the country and not only find employment for those seeking it, but arrange for the transference of unemployed to localities where there is a dearth of labor?"

"Intimately connected with the question of labor is the one relating to social welfare. Many European countries and other nations have taken steps nationally relating to many social welfare questions, for example, like providing for old age pensions, health insurance and other similar matters. Those questions are being agitated in the United States in some localities and a pensioning system has been adopted applying to a limited number of civil employments. It is being done in a desultory and probably unsatisfactory and unjust way. If it is wise to do it at all it should be wise for the national Government to do it; but before any comprehensive

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